

## Santa Rita Mountains Elegant Trogon Census

**Census Date:** Sunday May 24, 2020

**Census Time:** 6 to 11 a.m.

### **Pre-survey: Zoom meeting before survey online – details sent via email**

Any and all questions pertaining to the census will be welcome in the zoom email. On the aziba.org website are recordings of several types of Elegant Trogon calls to help counters recognize trogon vocalizations--if and when they hear them. They are also posted on the Arizona IBA website here: [http://aziba.org/?page\\_id=1994](http://aziba.org/?page_id=1994)

- The mp3 file beginning with Koink is the common call heard most often – it is likely a male advertising his territory or trying to attract a female. This certainly indicates you have a male but you cannot infer a pair from this call necessarily.
- The mp3 file beginning with Kow – you should listen to this one carefully – note the lack of space between each note, it is much more continuous than the Koink call. This does indicate a mated pair and I have sometimes heard both the male and female giving this call to each other. Her voice is considerably lower than his.
- The mp3 file beginning with W-kkk – this is an alarm call and it means the Trogons are distressed and you are likely very close to their nest. Back off immediately if you hear this sound. Wait a while and then cautiously try to find the nest if it is possible to do so without alarming the trogons.

Counters need to have a watch or a clock with them during the survey to fill out the time forms. If you are unable to print the attached forms, I will have additional copies available at the meeting. Please remember to bring a pen or pencil on count day, as well as the census time form and the checklist of other bird species. The census is for the purpose of counting Elegant Trogons, but we are also interested in obtaining a list of other species occupying trogon breeding habitat, although the actual numbers of each of the other species is not an objective. Please feel free to print an extra copy of each attachment for your personal records.

**Methodology 1 (Stationary):** In Madera Canyon counters are asked to take a position in the approximate center of their territory from 6-9 a.m., recording when they hear trogon vocalizations at 5 minute increments indicating location as down-canyon from their position, near the center of the territory, or up-canyon from the observer's position. If they can actually see the bird or birds, the counter records the sex(s) and number. After 9 a.m. counters are permitted to roam up and down the length of their assigned canyon territories, recording the same data, trying to see the bird or birds they may have only heard earlier--or perhaps find a nest, until the census ends at 11 a.m. Please retreat from any trogons giving alarm vocalizations--the call will be played at the organizational meeting and is included in the previous email as an mp3 file--but do attempt to discover the actual nest cavity. In the unusual circumstance that an active nest is discovered, please describe the nest location as well as possible on the back of the census form. All counters are asked to return their census form to the Santa Rita Lodge gift shop by noon if possible, regardless whether or not a trogon is detected in the counter's territory. Rick Taylor and/or Jennie MacFarland will be at the Santa Rita Lodge feeder area after we are done with our routes and will be collecting data sheets and discussing results. Negative results are also essential to an accurate census.

**Note:** To arrive at the center of a territory, especially in the upper branches of Madera Canyon, a counter may have to hike. This means the counter needs to depart for his or her territory with the appropriate amount of time to arrive by 6 a.m.

**Methodology 2 (Hiking):** This methodology is only for territories that are outside of Madera Canyon – for instance you are surveying Gardner Canyon.

Counters should plan on surveying the full length of their assigned canyon territory, usually within elevations from approximately 3,600' to approximately 4,200' between 6 a.m. and 11 a.m.. Most roads and trails in the Santa Ritas are in or near the canyon bottom riparian strands, precisely the habitat used most frequently by Elegant Trogons. Counters may work at any pace they choose, but obviously counters in longer canyons will need to cover more terrain in less time than counters in shorter canyons.

Be sure you have the new Canyon Transect data form if you are using this method.

**Notes for counters:** Where at all practical, counters should stay on designated trails/dirt roads. Provided the terrain is not too steep or rocky, forays off-trail for the purpose of sexing a calling trogon are permitted, but should be minimized. Do not leave the trail where the terrain is obviously treacherous.

The judicious use of taped play-backs is permitted **except for in Madera Canyon! In Madera Canyon playback is prohibited by the Forest Service.** Counters are not, however, obligated to use playbacks. If a counter decides to use playbacks, recordings need only be used at 0.5 mile intervals, and only briefly. Males ordinarily patrol canyon territories about 0.5 miles in length and call relatively frequently in spring, especially early in the morning. If a male is already calling it is unnecessary to use a mechanical playback. The purpose of a playback is only to elicit a response, not to draw the bird closer to the counter. If there is a response call, counters should try to approach close enough for a visual observation. Counters should

try to sex the bird or birds (males have iridescent green backs and females are a more neutral olive-brown), and determine whether one, two, or more individuals are involved. Pairs may be calling to one another. Territorial skirmishes among males are also relatively common in May and June. Occasionally a female is also present at these disputes. Female trogons call much less frequently than males, which make them more difficult to detect. They are most apt to vocalize when accompanied by a male. Although the female trogon's voice is typically deeper pitched or more hoarse sounding than the male's, for the purposes of this survey, no trogon should be sexed without a direct visual observation.

If a nest is discovered please withdraw to at least 75 feet from the nest tree. Agitated birds emit a sharp "wk-k-k-k" call and usually elevate their tail. This is often a sign that the observer is too near a nest. Although fledglings are rare this early, parent trogons exhibit much the same behavior. Once again, please withdraw 75' from the trogon(s).

**Data Collection:** A census form is being sent as a separate attachment. Census forms will also be provided to all counters. Counters who cannot either print the attachment or attend the meeting may record their data on any kind of paper that suits them, provided the results are legible. Record the start and end time of each observation. Trogons that are heard only should be noted as such using the letter "H" in the correct time cell. Please record the sex and number of any seen trogons—but please do not assign a gender to an unseen trogon. Using approximate mileage from the starting point and approximate elevation, please describe the relative position of the trogon in the canyon. Additionally, counters with GPS devices may record the coordinates of their observations. Do not, however, neglect to include mileage and elevation estimates. (or if you have a GPS unit, the UTM Nad 83 locations of a Trogon territory or nest)

Using distance and direction from a fixed reference point, as well as elevation, also describe as well as possible the location of any active trogon nest or nests (use the back of the form if necessary). Nest descriptions should include species of tree if known (e.g. sycamore, oak, pine), overall height of the tree, position on the tree (trunk or limb, dead or living wood, etc.), and approximate height of the cavity above the ground—as well as any other details that would enable the nest to be refound.

If no Elegant Trogons are detected in your assigned canyon, please note that fact at the bottom of the census form. Do not forget to write your name and assigned canyon on your data sheet before submitting it. Please include your telephone number and an e-mail address. All data sheets should be dropped off with at the designated collection point. Counters in remote canyons may not be able to submit their census forms by noon. Those counters should text Jennie MacFarland at (520-360-2213) as soon as they can obtain a phone signal to let us know you are safe.

We will not be meeting up after the meeting to follow social distancing protocols. Volunteers should enter their data online via online survey – linked to on the Elegant Trogon resources page.

**Results:** Results will be summarized and posted on the aziba.org website and on the AZ/NMbirds site. All participants will receive the results summary directly. Results are also forwarded to the Arizona Game & Fish Department, the Coronado National Forest, the land management agencies that administer the areas within the census zone.

**Safety:** If at all possible, participants are asked to work with at least one and no more than two other people. Inter-party conversation, of course, should be limited to an absolute minimum and conducted as quietly as possible. Each person, whether "officially" counting Elegant Trogons or not, should bring at least three pints of safe drinking water with them. Do not drink from springs or streams. Bring a snack or picnic lunch. Unless a doctor has ordered you to limit your consumption of salts, be sure to bring some item containing salt (e.g. salted nuts or chips, etc.). Do not leave roads or trails except for the purposes described above. If any illegal aliens, hunters, birdwatchers, or other recreationalists are encountered, courteously limit the interaction to the briefest possible time. For your own safety, do not confront anyone engaged in any activity you perceive as unlawful. Discontinue the Elegant Trogon census and report the possible criminal infraction to officials. In the unlikely event that a Mountain Lion or Black Bear is sighted, make enough noise to alert the animal to your presence. If the animal approaches make louder noises and wave your arms. Do not run or try to climb a tree. Only some areas of the count area have cell phone reception, but as a safety precaution it is suggested that you bring a cell phone with you during the census.

Please text Jennie at (520) 360-2213 when you have a signal when you are done with your survey so we know that you are safe.